

POSTER
INSIDE!

APRIL 30TH 1987

ONE OF THE HOTTEST NEWEST
ROCK BANDS!

*Read Their Story
In Page 12*



MOTLEY CRUE

The Return Of Rock's Mayhem

IRON MAIDEN

Is Their Space Show The Future
Face Of Metal?

STRYPER

Can Rock And Religion Coexist In One Band?

sounds of youth

Kickstart My Heart by keesbnees, vampyre (Magnus_L)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Alternate Universe - Bands, Drug Use, Eventual Fluff, Eventual Smut, Heavy Angst, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Heather Holloway, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Original Characters, Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington, Tommy Hagan

Relationships: Billy Hargrove & Steve Harrington, Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2021-05-07

Updated: 2021-05-07

Packaged: 2022-04-01 01:14:22

Rating: Mature

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 2

Words: 7,359

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Two up-and-coming bands are on the rise in the 80s music scene. Between Ferns has just returned from its incredibly successful tour of the UK and Ireland, and re-emerged after a small break. Meanwhile, W.E.T has been selling tickets like wildfire all over the US. It has been a year since the lead singer of Between Ferns, Steve Harrington, had a public confrontation with W.E.T's Billy Hargrove.

That's the story the tabloids will sell: because it's flashy, it's shocking. But they won't tell you that for a year, at the curtain call, the two fell into each others' arms. To put it simply, the pair had both shown sides of themselves not even close friends had seen, they existed in their own world up until they faced a violent uprooting.

When the two bands clash in Oklahoma, will the little friction from that encounter re-ignite a forgotten flame? Can they mend what's been broken?

1. MEDIA & INFO

Author's Note:

This is a collaborative work, roleplay, in between myself (muse: Billy Hargrove) and my friend (muse: Steve Harrington) @keesbnees.

We would like to take you into our private creation, which means, fair warning, this is going to be a roleplay format. We've done a bit of tinkering, corrected any mistakes, but it's not going to be perfect.

As for the content itself, here are a couple of trigger warnings: This work contains severe alcohol abuse, drug abuse, violence, suicidal ideation.

If you would like to see the artwork alongside this RP fic go to @keesbnees' Tumblr: swimbirdyswim.tumblr.com

BACKGROUND INFO:

W.E.T

Billy Hargrove: Backing vocals, drums.

Heather Holloway: Leading vocals, synth keyboard.

Max Mayfield: Gibson Thunderbird bass.

Jamie Pax: Electric guitar.

Genres: Heavy metal, hard rock.

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BETWEEN FERNS

Steve Harrington: Leading vocals, electric guitar.

Robin Buckley: Backing vocals, drums.

Tommy Hagan: Bass guitar.
Caz Byrne: Keyboardist (also plays guitar).
Genres: Alternative rock, pop rock.

(COMING SOON!)

OC:

NAME: Jamie Pax (James Doncaster.)

AGE: 23.

APPEARANCE: Tall, lean but quite skinny.

Brown hair past his shoulders/collarbone and soft green-hazel eyes.

PERSONALITY: Goofy, reckless, party animal but in reality he's a bit shy.

TRADEMARK: Sparkly eyeshadow, and heels + from England. (And his amazing fingering. On the guitar of course.)

OC:

NAME: Caz Byrne (Cassidy Byrne)

AGE: 22.

APPEARANCE: Fairly average height, lean and not particularly built. Freckled face, brown eyes, and brown (dyed) hair with some streaks in the front bleached out almost white.

PERSONALITY: Laid back, a pretty quiet guy but he is extremely uncensored. A little sleazy...

TRADEMARK: Painted nails and occasional lipstick.

Otherwise, a fashion sense that is quite strange and inevitable latches onto the other band members (for the sake of continuity). Lol Irish.

GET YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A TICKET FOR BON JOVI'S LIVE IN MONTREAL, 7/23!

MÖTLEY CRÜE'S NIKKI SIXX NEAR-DEATH

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**MÖTLEY CRÜE'S NIKKI SIXX NEAR-DEATH
HEROIN OVERDOSE MORE ON PAGE 7**

10c



WEEKLY ROCKSTAR



5TH JULY, 1986

VOL 6., NO. 42

KISS WITH A FIST

**A SHOW TO REMEMBER
FOR BETWEEN FERNS AND
W.E.T FANS AS THE DRUMMER
AND SINGER FISTFIGHT.**

Rumours have long been circulating about the nature of these two band members' relationship. The quarrel took place yesterday during a Fourth of July charity concert. The band members refused to make a statement but

eye-witnesses said the ill-tempered drummer set off his wrath on his long-time best friend Steve Harrington. More details regarding the fight on page 3.



2. HALL C

BILLY:

Wilder dreams had been had, his wildest dream was thinking that he'd found love. A lie masked with shiny wrapping that twinkled in the blinding spotlights. A part of fame was the publicity, the media, people never left you the fuck alone which meant rumours would start bubbling beneath the surface. Those days were the best of his life, a whole year spent making love to the same person was incredible. There wasn't a need to go looking for a groupie that would throw herself at you without thinking. Billy had built a reputation that he had an affinity for older women, specifically ones that had children of their own but he wasn't the type to really grow enthusiastic about the encounters, which only damaged him further.

It was a hollow, empty feeling which started to bleed into their music these days. A lot of the lyrics for their songs came from him, especially their new up-and-coming album. Their music always grew, their fame with it. These days they were wanted outside of America even if they frequently toured the States because it was easier to get around. They'd signed on a record label and had an accountant take care of their income. Nevertheless, the dream was to have their own record label because he knew they were making ten times more than they were receiving. It was their hard earned money and the payout should be reasonable.

As it were, they were touring the States again, performing their latest single in a couple of places but they managed to strike blades with a distasteful band and even more distasteful band member: Steve Harrington. While he wanted to enjoy the sights of Oklahoma, he didn't want to have any run-ins at the hotel, that's why for the most part he stayed in his room and continued working on his music.

That didn't mean he could avoid him forever; before setting up the stage, their manager came to inform them that Hall C was too small for the number of people they were going to host since they sold over two thousand tickets.

That wasn't even scratching the surface in comparison to the arenas they sold out but this was an almost exclusive experience for those

that wanted an intimate take with the band. Their other shows sold way more than that. Nevertheless, he'd heard about the people who didn't get their tickets going crazy over it, the booth had to close down for the rest of the day because one of the workers got injured. People were insane.

For this performance, he wore a mesh top with a sleeveless jacket, a pair of leather pants and platform boots. There was the pendant his mother gave him hung around his neck, as always, and he accessorised with an earring and rings. When it came to accessories he didn't overdo it but he did love glamping up nonetheless. Sound check was starting up, he took a seat at his drum kit, started beating at the individual drums, performing a few tricks with his sticks as the other hand hammered away with his head bobbing to the music.

It wasn't long that he heard the commotion outside and eventually it ran inside and he couldn't help but sigh at the sight of Harrington. Standing, he's jumping off the stage and his sister is already sighing. "Billy." She's growling.

"Stay out of it, asshole." Then he's standing proudly, straightening his back out. "Look who decided to show up. Harrington. You look a little angry amigo, is everything okay?"

STEVE:

He would be lying to himself if he pretended like that year wasn't the best of his life. During that time, he wrote the best love songs— an irritatingly sappy fact which he had yet to come to terms with himself. It wasn't like he went and released all of them out to the public then, just a scrambled few, with the edits of Robin, whom he trusted dearly to polish into the best work. He still remembered her disgusted looks in the recording studio. But hey, people were always suckers for a good love song. They sold. They were relatable and could be recorded on a tape that had a dolled up label stuck on it, on which someone had scribbled words and song titles that was a semblance to a confession. Yes, Steve did write a song about making a tape like that and how he wouldn't know what songs to put on it. In hindsight, not so wise when some time later after the break up—if one could really call it that—he found himself blinded by lights as he sang that same song, over and over.

The power lyrics had was unimaginable. When he sang that song, he vividly recalled every day; "waking up with sunshine" chanted out from the last row up to him, and his chest constricted a little tighter around his heart and lungs. And god, did he try to sing it with spirit even when he fashioned a cut on his lip from the fight. It was a mistake, one he took note of for the future. Their label praised it, saying it was emotive and full of soul, and sometimes Steve, dramatically, wondered if that song sucked it out of him. A passing thought, he'd forget in a few seconds whilst staring distantly to the nearest object, to come back to reality with a "hmm?".

The worst news he had heard was the list of locations W.E.T was touring. For one, he didn't 'care'. But then came the news that their locations matched up in Oklahoma, and with their fucking luck, they matched down to the venue. To the day. Almost down to the hour. Fucking great. There was only one wish Steve had and that was that the place lit up in flames. Either one of two things would happen: either Billy's arrogant band of goons would be consumed, or primarily that he himself would be burnt up in the flames. Or better yet, that Satan would think it was some sort of party for him, split the ground up open and march out and just fuck him up, since that was just as good as encountering Billy Hargrove.

His luck only seemed to get better that day as in the last moment the halls suddenly changed. His band got paired to the smaller of the two, despite being promised the larger. That resulted in a slight issue with fans having to be crammed inside. Or so he was told by Tommy, who had been told by who-knows-who-the-hell from the tech crew. Whether it was true or pure gossip he didn't stop to question. Of course he knew who was taking over their hall. So after a heavy argument with the crew, he managed to barge into Hall C.

The sounds of the cymbals and bass drum methodically dancing to the song prompted who he was about to confront. The brunet shrugged off someone from the crew and ventured deeper into the large space. Whoever let Billy wear a mesh top should be instantly fired, Steve mentally highlighted. In contrast, he sported a bomber jacket with checkers running horizontally over the midway length of his arms and towards his back. At the back, they become a more playful array, with new colours introduced. This was paired with a

plain tee and some simple jeans, that were nonetheless a perfect fit. Converse were a 'must' for Steve half the time.

Cockiness got the best of him, because there *he* was, plucking at his nerves to get a rouse out of him. It was practically impossible not to now, when he was already worked up as it was.

"Oh, you think so, yeah? I don't know, asshole, is everything okay? Is everything going to be okay when half the crowd doesn't fit in our hall?", he spat back, eyebrows furrowed. Alright, perhaps coming on a little too headstrong.

BILLY:

When you have to sing a song that doesn't correlate with your present emotions it can be tricky to deliver the appropriate message but that's where showmanship came in— his voice was powerful, had the rasp every iconic rock band did, the soul found in the pit of every singer but he didn't want to be in that kind of a spotlight, the drums were his passion. One of the songs they were performing tonight would be sung by him, since the kind of emotion it harboured mainly lay on his shoulders. Heather never failed to deliver the full effect of the lyrical compositions, she was a genius in her own right; she wouldn't have been lead vocals otherwise. Again, it was a common experience that everyone had and she had a way of channelling and tapping into those memories to bring out that vehemence. There were times her voice shook when she sang but it was a breathless, humanising delivery each time.

It was not the first time he praised the woman but he did it in his own way— god forbid he outright told anyone anything. That was something he struggled with in his relationship with Steve but he said it in his own way. Such as the time he took a month off touring simply to be with him because Steve's band was at a bit of a standstill while they rested after touring another country. Being away from him had been awful, he spent so many minutes on the phone to talk to him, simply to ask him how his day had been or for more intimate conversations. Seeing him in the flesh again was almost a shock to his system, had him almost drained from the damn sight alone but what in the fuck was he supposed to do? What he knew to do best, of course.

Insult.

"You really think you're gonna have that big of a turnout?" Laughter is erupting, his aggravating high-pitched intonation filling up the hall. "Oh, Steve. You've always been so cute." It was an insulting jab, of course, one he was no stranger to because that hurt less than watching someone he was still madly in love with stray from him.

The best thing he could think of to properly push him away was to beat the fuck out of him. That would make him hate him, right? That would push him away and never make him want to see him again, right? It was a really messy, bad breakup and he'd cried in his hotel room for a solid hour before drinking a whole bottle of whiskey. Fuck if he was gonna be sober for what he was feeling— he didn't want any part in that awful shit. Billy happened to hate feeling sorry for himself too which only made it worse. Eyeing him up and down, he's inhaling sharply, "Look man, the problem isn't with me, alright? I don't make these decisions."

STEVE:

The last time he'd seen Billy it had been a blurred gaze, and he was pretty sure he only saw him out of one eye. Iron drenched his tongue, a coldness stressing his respiratory system as his lip stung. He told himself, amongst all that, that he saw Billy with a slightly pained look in his eyes as he peered down onto him and straightened up. Steve had stopped fighting back, the blond overpowering the motions and got a good set of punches in before calling it enough. He remembered the buzzed out beat in the background, that silence filling the room. Quietude, with the occasional whisper, had otherwise taken over. Yeah, but those eyes gave him away. Like always, they betrayed him. Pools of emotions lined by long lashes.

If he bothered to pause and really think about it, it shocked him how they went from being stuck together at the hip for nearly a month to this, to not talking or jumping to claws and bared teeth.

"Yeah, I know, I know. Just as cute as your band touring outside the states-- Oh wait... That didn't-- Ooooh... Yeaah...", Steve nodded, propping his hands onto his hips. Two could play at insults, and Steve knew where to hit him. "Or as cute as your mom? Oh, wait, that

too...", he hissed through his teeth as he shook his head. If it wasn't clear from how he primarily entered the room, he most definitely was not in the mood that day to deal with any sort of shit from the other. He propped a leg out a little, leaning onto the left side of his hip.

"Funny how these decisions don't get made by you and you just up and run with it. We fucking booked it, you guys know that from prior to getting here-- What are you playing at? You knew I was going to storm in here to talk to you", a little worm in the back of Steve's mind was itching at him, telling him that it was all a plot. That this was just one of Billy's big schemes to make a whole scene, make a joke out of him and declare his pure hatred against Steve's own band.

BILLY:

Low blow. Anger started to uproar with the background noise of overlapping drums in flawless beat with the rhythm of his heart or was that the blood pounding in his ears? This was something he quickly learned about Steve— he could be a real callous piece of shit scum of the Earth person when he wanted to be. The guy had a sharp tongue that he didn't know when to bite down on, and it was an adjustment when they transitioned from saying *I love you* in the middle of the night to verbally abusing each other on the phone or in interviews. Whenever Billy got asked about him, he deflected the questions until they got the hint that he didn't want to talk about it anymore. It took a few months, up to a year almost, because their relationship going from unlikely best friends to public enemies shocked a lot of people. A few fans got pissed with the media for exploiting their relationship and ruining a good thing. Yeah, even he was fucking pissed at it but he had to do what he had to do to keep them both safe.

If he cut him, he knew the right amount of pressure to apply, the type that would do enough damage but wouldn't send him to the hospital or an early grave. However, the second Steve said that about his mother, he got this insatiable urge to strangle him with the very pendant she gave him. "You wanna say that again?" It was a challenging rhetorical question, nostrils flaring with his eyes flashing this crimson, a blackness overtaking the gentle icy blue. His hand reached out almost on instinct to wrap around the other's throat, with Jamie quickly yelling, "Whoa whoa whoa! Relax, boys!" as he

literally flew off the stage to come break them up, shoving Billy back. "Stop. It's not worth it. Don't do this shit before a show, man."

Straightening up, Billy is huffing out of his nostrils before shaking his head. "Congratulations in showing how miserable you are in your continued failed relationships, including with your own mom and dad who didn't fucking want you and left you by yourself all day long. It seems you don't fucking learn, Harrington. You want to get your ass kicked again?"

Jamie is keeping himself lined between the two of them to make sure neither of them crossed the boundary line, "Let it go, both of you!"

"My manager told me before we came in. It's not a problem for me to switch halls but you're clearly the one with a fucking problem, so run your ass outta here and go fix it." As always, Billy wasn't relenting or backing down. That wasn't his style, he would say what he felt deep down and talk shit simply because he felt like it and in that way he was attuned with his emotions, it's simply that they didn't have the range most people did. Anger was what he had left to fuel him after all the shit he went through and when he fought, he fought dirty.

STEVE:

Oh, he knew. He stood well aware of what he was doing pushing that button and plucking up that bit of information from the darkness of his past. It was an intimate fraction, shielded in the tenderness of Billy, which laid beyond a landscape of shards and spikes. Similar to a sequence of the Looney Tunes, Steve had been through dynamite and anvils, a full array of defences, a course of bumps and bursts of aggression just to get Billy to open up about that. It was extremely low to play that against him, just as it was extremely low for Billy to beat him senseless when things seemed to finally start going well. When things gained a sense of normality, and the constant in his life became someone he could call 'home' when a million miles away. The fans still tormented him now when they managed to get close enough. Small questions, asking about the other, asking about why they fell out. Sometimes it went like that one interview, where he simply crossed his arms and sat there, staring in silence. Robin was confused too by his lack of response and when the interviewer insisted softly, he sprung up with:

"So that's it? You book me to talk about Billy Hargrove? He'd be all too happy for you to book him."

That, or rushing to his hotel room —with shades on, covering thus the bruises— after being continuously hammered with questions, to burst out into tears and break down like a child.

The hand around his neck was not entirely unfamiliar, but Steve was quick to push at the arm to attempt to dismantle the grip. Jamie marched between them just in time because Steve was ready to throw a punch to get him off. Of course he was, it was exactly how he wanted all this to go down. His jaw was already jutting, his shoulders squaring up to the latter.

"Failed relationships? Hah, real big coming from an asshole who's a homewrecker. Yeah, I'd like to see you try, Hargrove", he shoved into Jamie, taking a few steps back after this provocation.

At the hall's doorway, Tommy peeked into the room before stepping out again. He walked in with more determination a moment later, followed by a taller male who cupped the back of his head with his hands, arms raised. His eyes wandered around the space, letting out a sharp wolf whistle which broke Steve's train of thought for a moment. He caught onto the end of that sentence and opened his mouth once more, ready to spit back.

"You got a nice hall!", Caz called out, nodding his head in circles, lips pouted. "The acoustics... they're good in this one." Steve clenched his jaw impossibly tighter, ready to bust his molars.

BILLY:

Home-wrecker.

No, that's not a title he can claim. There were plenty that people decided to spring at him that he embraced with all his might because claiming a title then making it your own is an empowering thing. Sure, there's faggot and queer and others he couldn't redeem but there were those he could.

Home-wrecker though? No. First of all, he was a twenty-year-old young man with zero responsibilities aside from his gigs, plus other

things related to his band. Secondly, he wasn't wrecking anything. A lot of these women didn't hold back from saying how lousy their husband was; both in bed as outside of it. Their marriage was often already in shambles— if it wasn't him, it would be another young suitor to give them the ride of their life and he preferred to have a personal touch. Older women were more experienced, mellowed out, had their styles figured out and the ones he went for kept with the latest trends. A lot of chums didn't even know how goddamn fine their wives were, which is really depressing. Again, he wasn't the one that was married either, he didn't hold any commitment or loyalty to anyone; that year he'd spent with Steve, when things started getting serious he didn't even look at other people, much less sleep with them. Even before that he didn't bat much of an eye since their relationship started a little before they both made it official.

If they were stepping out of their marriages, it wasn't his fault. "You talk a lot of shit, Harrington. Maybe you should wash your mouth out before someone does it for you." His insults jabbed cruelly as per usual but that didn't mean his voice wasn't at times softer because fuck, he did love this guy. For god's sake he kept a picture of them in his wallet, and okay he knew it was weird but he'd even kept a piece of fabric that tore off his shirt while they were up to some crazy shit together. It reminded him of that night and how much fun they had running around the city creating trouble.

Max watched intently at the sidelines and sighed. A sister always knew— all of the band members had close ties but something about a familial relationship had her knowing ten times more than they did. She knew her brother well these days and knew that with Steve it was extra layered because of how he really felt. The others were unsure or oblivious but to her it was crystal clear they're in love. "We have a lot of work to do, I think we should get started." She inputed.

Both Jamie and Billy addressed her with their eyes— while Jamie went to help, Billy stayed to talk to Caz. "They are, but it won't matter much when it's packed with people."

STEVE:

Of course Steve didn't believe a word of what he was saying. He said it just to push his buttons and piss him off. And it worked all too

effectively because if it weren't for Jamie between them, he was pretty sure they would already be battered and bruised. The stylist would *not* have been happy with him if he ripped up another tee, no matter how plain, or the sponsored jacket he sported on top. Steve held his gaze with Billy, arms crossed now. He didn't have to say anything else-- or maybe he did, he just needed to figure out what the contents were of what he was loading next into the chamber before pulling the trigger.

It was almost opportune that Caz came along as Jamie was leaving. Tommy would have only encouraged a fight—despite his immense admiration for Billy. It seemed only Caz noticed the way Tommy's face lit up and his eyes shone like a little kid getting a new toy. Just as it seemed that only him and Robin noticed that Billy held a little more importance in Steve's phone book and agenda during the course of a year than he would admit. That was just the catch about keeping one's mouth shut; that he could observe the world turning around him and with it, it's inhabitants. He offered a glance over to Max, nodding his head to her, whether she saw it or not and redirected it back to the blond.

There it was. This was why Steve liked the guy so much; he was snarky, he was smart. And he had an ass that made a whole room turn. The keyboardist had to laugh, the sound echoing out around the room.

"Hahah-- Do you get off to that, buster? It's true, but hey, at least they will appreciate it in the whole experience of the show...You know how it goes", his eyes trailed him up and down. In the time he was speaking, his arm had slithered around Steve's shoulders, letting it dangle there. Now his head turned to the brunet, hand patting his chest. "What's got you all worked up, hm? This isn't what it's all about, Steve, we're gonna have fun."

A little fun for all involved, so he wanted to swing things around. Get Steve off that tense vibe and at the same time tease the tempered man before them. He leaned in to whisper a soft "Right?" as he bit his earlobe. Just as Steve began to retreat, complain too, Caz hooked his arm tighter around him and licked a stripe across his cheek. After this, he knew he had had his fun and released the other, allowing himself to be shoved as Steve turned to leave the hall out of

annoyance. Caz followed him with his eyes, not minding that he got to see him go. A beat later he was focusing back on Billy.

"You keep cool or you'll bust out of those pants. Have you checked if you can squat in them? Sit at your drums and all?", with a slow backwards walk, distance began to be set between them, his eyebrows furrowing as a sly smile betrayed his sympathy. He whistled for Tommy to come along—very much as if calling a dog—and winked at the blond before also taking his leave.

BILLY:

Jealousy severed through him— anyone touching *his* man like that would prompt an automatic decking. Thing was, he'd always known Caz was a piece of work, if he was willing to do this in front of him, what were they doing behind closed doors? Was Steve sleeping with this guy now? God, he sure as hell hoped that wasn't the case. As much as he wanted to demand Caz stop himself from tonguing Steve in front of him, he knew it wasn't his place to, even if he wanted to knock his head right off his shoulders. The guy's poor attitude didn't impress him, he didn't say anything as he turned back towards the stage where his band mates, now friends— plus his stepsister, were both a little shocked or pretending to work on something.

The microphones were working because Heather started to test her vocal range on it and Jamie had gotten the satisfaction of hearing feedback from the amplifier. As he was turning though, Billy felt his shoulder being grabbed which already caused his fist to tighten before he heard Tommy, "Heard you were hosting auditions. Make sure to reserve a spot for me, huh?" Before the man is taking off after clapping Billy's shoulder.

The blond threw a glance over the same shoulder, the other's palm tingling there. Trouble in paradise. What a surprise. Letting out a sigh, he was already feeling like he wanted to down a whole bottle of Jack, maybe dabble in something stronger this time. It really fucking sucked having to deal with a life on top of fame, the demand for an appearance even if you didn't feel like it. They had to always give their all too, disappointing fans wasn't an option. Their manager would have their asses if they fucked up a show. Which is understandable, it took a lot out of the whole crew to set it up,

themselves included. It wasn't a walk in the park. At least the emotion would be there tonight because after that he felt like absolute shit.

He felt eyes on him, which prompted him to sigh and glanced up from his kit. "What? Can we just practice and get this over with?"

STEVE:

It was little things that gave Billy Hargrove away, Caz noted. And it was enough to see a vein jut out a fraction to get his satisfaction. This would be easy, he told himself, his smile carrying him out that door and all the way to the stage in the other concert hall. It drizzled through his fingertips as he played the keys, fiddling with the pitch and volume out of pure joy to then set them for the first song they were going to run through. His eyes set on the back of Steve's head as the male himself was picking up his guitar begrudgingly, as if he had something set against it. He knew it was just that he was disappointed from talking to the managers and discovering they had been set with a smaller hall due to a smaller attendance. Alright, it was fair, W.E.T toured the States more than them the last few times, especially since they set out to Ireland and the UK not long ago. It was normal, Caz wasn't too fussed. And frankly, neither was Steve. Steve was bugged out about having Billy so close yet so far out of his grasp. Not that the Irishman knew this detail but he could guess the tune of that song.

He noted Tommy entering moments later and began to play the keys in tune to his walk, for which Steve quickly killed down the fun, throwing them back on track—in highlighted bitterness,— of their scheduled practice. Right, they had a concert to perform for.

That was a whole ...state to unfold, Heather evaluated as she adjusted the height of the microphone. Her eyes were lined in black, highlighted by bright makeup that streaked back towards her temples. They followed Billy until he was out of her range of vision. A gaze shared with Jamie surely told it all though. Of course it didn't end there, of course they couldn't just pretend that all hadn't happened. So, she turned to find the tamed devil now seated at the drums set. Though he looked like an angel with those curls and pretty eyes, they all knew he was raging as if he was born on an open flame.

Nevertheless knew better than to trust appearances, though Billy took extra care to have a guarded edge to his visual.

"Billy", she called out to him. Fingers hooked on the edge of her ripped up tee as she adjusted it. No matter how that mauled up disaster fell, it still showed the black studded bra beneath, which seemed to be the whole point. She was in uniform with the rest of the band, leather trousers clung to her legs, topped off by boots. The waist was hugged by chains and belts with excessive buckles. "We should talk after. Yeah?", she didn't wait for a response, well aware it wouldn't be a nice one and instead signalled out the start of the song.

BILLY:

Money talks, bullshit walks couldn't be a truer statement in the music industry. In this context the money was the only thing that mattered, the people were the *shit that walks* because they would do anything to fuck you over for a pretty penny. While he trusted their manager, their record label had their own set of legs that walked in whatever direction they wanted to— if they wanted to run away with their money they'd do it too. Their manager did his best not to let that happen but there were a few things in life that you can't control.

Their local presence was very influential but the band had dreams of branching out their music. It was reaching the U.K. slowly, Britain itself was a common target for many, but they did once have a short tour in Germany after a larger band opened for them as an introductory into the show. They had a lot to live up to as they got mixed up in a sea of legends but it had left a rather good impression on them. Sometimes even if the lyrics were in a different language and you didn't fully understand them, it was the rhythm, beat and vibe of the music that gave you the rejuvenation you needed to put your right foot forward.

Before the music started at the signalling, "There's not—" but he got cut off by the loud strum from Jamie deciding to strike a chord, which had him settling at the drum kit to start his own banging. Music meant the damn world to him, that was why he had a shit ton of cassette tapes in his bedroom back at home; unless his father decided to clear it out. Nevertheless, he was thinking about buying a house or penthouse in California, he didn't want to live anywhere

else and that was the only permanent residence he wanted. The process of moving out from home had been a taxing one and he hadn't put a lot of energy into buying a place of his own since he was barely settled anywhere anyway. They were always in a caravan, plane, hotel room, bus or any other vehicle. They'd slept backstage, in cars, you name it.

It depended on where they were going but usually the designated drivers were Jamie and himself. In any case, he got lost in the music.

Tommy had thought about leaving for a while now—the music didn't resonate with him anymore, it wasn't his style. On top of that, he simply didn't care for the band members. Caz got on his nerves, Robin was too.... Robin, and Steve? Their relationship wasn't the same anymore. Now Billy? W.E.T? That's the kind of band he wanted to be in. Besides, Heather was hot. Their own practice started, about forty-five minutes later a very disgruntled Hopper walked in with his sleeves rolled up and hair dishevelled.

Robin almost instantly knew what happened but she kept drumming as he sat down in the lone chair.

STEVE:

Despite all the bullshit and annoyance Steve riled up prior to the show in regards to the halls and equipment—which funnily was just their own—and what not, the show went great. They had an amazing attendance, some people standing out in the hall that would budge their way in when they could. The interaction between the crowd and the band was fantastic, in the words of Caz: everyone all around had a deadly time! The show wrapped up and they locked up the hall as the last few people streamed out finally. Steve was putting away the equipment, starting to unplug cords when Caz moved straight past him, jumping down off of the stage. The lead singer let out an exclamation of sorts, a call to attention which only had the keyboardist spinning around to tilt his head towards him, eyebrows raised, but nonetheless continued to back out towards the door.

"We need to clean up— where are you going?", Steve questioned the

other. Caz shrugged and tilted his head towards where Hall C was situated in the building.

"Tryna catch a few songs from the others— see what the fuss is all about for two thousand tickets. Think it's worth the attention?", He wiggled his eyebrows and motioned to Robin to join him, then gesturing Tommy. "Come on! We have all the time in the world later to clean this mess up", he hooked his arm around Robin when she was in reach and lead her out of the hall.

Steve debated following. For a few seconds, he stood there, with Tommy and Robin having left with Caz. He had just closed up the guitar case and the sweepers dragged about the remaining messes of the night. Regret would consume him if he did go, he reminded himself, gathering up a cable. Or, he would regret it even further if he didn't. His doe eyes panned up across the stage along the floor, to the door. The thud of something dropping, the squeak of high top sneakers and the door unlocking and prying open, followed by a comment with the nearest stage crew; all signs of Steve making up his mind and ensuring the safety of their instruments whilst they were gone. Against the wall right opposite to the hall door, Caz waited for Steve. He had his back pressed to it, hands sandwiched between him and the surface. His face broke out into a sharp smirk as he hooked an arm about the latter and led him to Hall C.

It was a tight crowd. The temperature was considerably higher, the room becoming an overwhelm of loud music and noise, of screams and cries out, mixed with sweat and general scent of adrenaline with a line of beer. Even having peeled his jacket off long ago during his own show, Steve felt almost too warm to be in that tight space. The two males soon found Tommy and Robin in the end of that crowd and the group snaked through the tight room, mainly along the side to get to the front. Heather sang a high note as Max ripped that guitar up, and Jamie absolutely rounded those sounds off. In the back they could hear the drums drizzling softly to then wreck into the storm when Heather elevated another sound from her gut, sharp and loud and clear. Steve had to admit, she really did manage to hit all those notes cleanly. To perfection.

By the time they reached the front, the heavy song came to an end. They thanked the way the crowd shifted around or otherwise they

wouldn't have made it so far forward. The next song began and Steve kept his gaze down but soon enough he recognised the starting notes.

Well, fuck.

BILLY:

Leaving Steve behind to his own devices concerned Robin slightly—she didn't want him being left alone after the rather unpleasant encounter. Their history was unknown to her in reality, she could have guessed a thing or two with their earlier demeanour in the best year of their so-called friendship or whatever Steve said but she never pushed him about it. The news outlets and media did plenty of that, she wanted to be a friend to him not another crazed journalist or fan. Nevertheless, when hooked by Caz it was hard to get out, she found herself trailing towards the Hall because why not? It would be fun to find out their rhythm, style, their live presence. Studio presence and performance was entirely different in comparison to being in front of a crowd in real time.

Their crowd was much more mellow— they came to find out. It was loud, steamy, with a hint of teenage or young adult excitement (for the most part). A lot of people screamed in her ear with every step she took further in and when Steve came by she ultimately brought him closer to her. All of them stood next to one another, hoping not to get lost in the crowd.

There was a short pause, everyone held their breath. The setup had already been prepared since they didn't want to waste time on adjusting and potentially having a major issue of some sort, Billy still had to man the drums which meant that he would have to remain sitting, obviously they didn't want there to be interference with the loud drumming and his vocals.

Somehow, they made it work.

Then again, this wasn't their first performance and if Tommy Lee could have his whole drum set elevated on a spinning contraption, this could be done too. Billy started off strong, there wasn't any waver in his voice, the notes were carrying the way he intended them to, the power and rasp in his voice one that resonated with legendary

rock voices. There was an edge to it, as there was in every part of him.

However, when the lyrics carried, that steadiness began to falter.

A live performance couldn't hide emotion like a studio recording could. On top of that, he would have done much better if he didn't have to encounter the man the song was about prior to having to deliver it to thousands of fans.

"I gave my blood and my tears and loved you cyanide!" That caused his voice to hiccup in a hitch that melted away with the rest of the song in a rather beautiful way. "You're all I need, make you only mine!" The backing vocals came in, "*I love you*," then Billy came in again, "—so I set you free!" The beating on the drums grew rampant, Billy reminded himself that he had a crowd in front of him when his eyes finally opened again, he's giving the drumstick a twirl, moving as much as he could from his seated position. Usually, the attention was on the guitarist or the singer but people were looking at him; the spotlight helped keep him in frame too. It's when he caught Steve's gaze that his heart dropped. What the fuck was he doing here?

STEVE:

The first time he heard the song it was on the radio. The connection kept falling out but Billy's voice stood out to him. He would recognise it anywhere. He remembered mumbling in complaint about what the fuck the lyrics were since the static ate up most of them. Out there, on a country road on the way to meet his parents for Thanksgiving or alike, it wasn't very surprising he couldn't hear it. No, not meeting them for Thanksgiving, it was to pick up a list of items for the meal itself. He had already had the pleasure of facing his extremely disappointed father earlier than the meal itself, at the meal he just made a show of it in front of extended family. And that was why he had missed multiple Thanksgivings in a row, as well as Christmases.

A day or two after, he drove to the nearest large city that was well connected enough to have a decent music store. He obviously knew a few, since his small town situation would otherwise make collecting music and gear near impossible. A sunny autumn day, the light pouring into the place. Multiple rockstars and pop idols stared at him

from the walls. He requested the tape, requested listening to it and when he got those padded headphones on there was a gap of time in which Steve forgot he had done all that. All he remembered that was for the rest of the day his gut sunk. Maybe it wasn't his gut but his heart, he wouldn't be able to tell when he told himself the other had taken that part of him with him.

Steve felt that same sinking sensation now. It was nauseating, it was as if suddenly three thousand people were in that crowd, maybe even four thousand. He felt claustrophobic, despite being well aware he was not and so he fought the feeling which made it all the worse.

And then their eyes met. He thought at first Billy was just scanning the crowd, that surely he didn't see him. But a falter in his voice, a chink in his performance gave him away.

Steve sucked in air, swallowing down the bitterness forming in his mouth.
